Betty Bicknell

THE OMAND FAMILY

The Omand family, particularly the living member of it Frederic C. (Ted),is interesting and important because they were early residents of Edmonton, have seen its development and progress. Ted who has a wonderful memory of the people and stories of this section is also an experienced riverman and naturalist and knows this district thoroughly. He has known the Harrison Youngs, McDougalls, Groats, [redacted], Walters, in fact most of the people involved in the development of Edmonton.

Mrs. Omand's maternal grandfather was a Captain Moran, born and highly educated in England. He joined the British Army, served in various countries and was finally posted to Lower Canada. A brother of his founded Moran College in Upper Canada (Ontario). Captain Moran was killed in action in the War of 1812 leaving his widow with seven children to fend for themselves. The widow found it quite a hardship because of a lack of a field of employment for a refined woman. They struggled as best they could until John Douglass, descendent of the house of Black Douglass, married the oldest daughter and thereafter was a provider and guardian of the family.

John Douglass was a British Army man who had served in Egypt, India, Bermuda and finally was sent to Canada and stationed in Quebec. He served his full twenty-five years of service and was granted his request for two extra years because of good conduct.

Mary Douglass(Mrs. Omand) was born in 1852 in Montreal, one of ten children of John Douglass. She married Joseph Clark when she was seventeen. He had his medical and dental degrees from the Old Country where his uncle was Physician in Extraordinary to Queen Victoria. Mary and Joseph lived in

Eastern Canada, moving from Montreal to Toronto and down into the States as the spirit moved them. He made a great reputation for himself and was successful financially. Mary was a widow and a mother before she was twenty having lost her husband a month before her baby was born. Dr. Clarke was going from Toronto to Ottawa for a consultation and was killed in a train wreck. After the first terrible shock passed she gave painting lessons and did still life and landscape art in Toronto. During the First North West Rebellion (the Red River Insurrection of 1869-70) Mary's oldest brother John joined the militia and came west to Winnipeg probably with Colonel Garnet Wolseley. After the Rebellion he decided to make it his home. Wishing to see her brother, and hoping for new subjects for painting Mary decided to come to Winnipeg. It was then that the whole family moved to Winnipeg and John Douglass (her father) died some 12 years later.

In Winnipeg Mary met Joe Hebert, a handsome man with a wonderful physique - 220 lbs. of bone and muscle. He was a self-made man, starting out at a very early age to shift for himself. He was a mining expert in precious metals, owning mining property around Toronto and Port Arthur. Now he was on his way to Fort Edmonton to investigate the possibilities of placer mining on the Saskatchewan River and other business possibilities. They decided to marry on his return. He came west before 1880 because the railroad was not yet built. He homesteaded the Mayfair Flat and built a log house. He returned to Winnipeg and they were married and came west by train to Calgary. This must have been about 1883 because the Canadian railroad to Calgary in July 1883 Pacific was constructed at this time (completed in 1885, Nov.7).

They came north to Edmonton by prairie Schooner as there was no railroad between Edmonton and Calgary. Among their household belongings was the first piano and complete parlor suite brought to Edmonton. The parlor suite was sold to Canon Newton of the Anglican Church and the piano to a Roman Catholic Mission when the Heberts moved East. When Mrs. Hebert returned west she purchased back the parlor suite and it is to-day in Ted Omand's home.

Joe Hebert filed on and proved up a homestead which is now known as the Mayfair Flat, in Edmonton Settlement Survey as River Lot #1. While engaged in his homestead duties he read an advertisement of a reward of $50,000 offered by the U.S. Government for the discovery of a seam of mica of certain dimensions and quality. While prospecting in Nevada some years before he had discovered just such a seam of mica and they decided to sell their household effects and find the mica seam. He spent some months in a fruitless search. He then served as a consultant on mining property. While inspecting a mine he was injured by falling timbres. Mrs. Hebert took him east for consultation but he died of concussion. His last request was that his homestead in Edmonton was to be bequeathed to his step-son George Clarke when he was of age.

Mrs. Hebert dispossed of his mining holdings in the east and returned to Edmonton after an absence of about ten years. This time it was not such an arduous journey as the railroad had reached Strathcona in 1891 ~~Edmonton~~. She took up residence on the homestead on Mayfair Flats.

Allan Omand was born and married in the Orckney Islands and came to Canada and homesteaded near Lake Winnipeg. There, due to a particularly hard winter, he and his wife nearly

starved to death so they moved to Edmonton and homesteaded the Windsor Park district. He had two children. His wife was never well after her dreadful experience and eventually died.

Mrs. Hebert and Mr. Omand homesteaded the adjoining properties and eventually their mutual sorrow and sympathies drew them together and they were married. One son, Frederic C (Ted) was born in 1896.

Several years after his second marriage Allan Omand became possessed of the wanderlust. After trying his hand at freighting, river man and boat building he and a party including Dr. Braithwaite's brother attempted to get through to the Yukon during the Klondyke rush of 1898. From then on his family heard little of him and his last known address was Westminster,B.C. A brother homesteaded the section south to McKernan's Lake.

During the Klondyke rush Allan Omand sold his farm to Dan McFadan who was killed during the Boer War. The homestead reverted back to Allan Omand who sold it to John McFadan who in turn sold it to be subdivided into Windsor Park.

After she was left alone, Mrs. Omand and her two sons, George Clarke and Ted Omand moved back to the Hebert homestead because it was more convenient for living. At the time when the Pollard's operated the brick yard below the High Level Bridge they also operated one on Mayfair.

During the flood of 1899 Mrs. Omand and family moved into a dwelling which was situated on the knoll where the Mayfair Club House now stands. This, however, was not safe either as the water came almost to the door step. Shortly after they moved to the top of the hill on the south end of the homestead. About that time the farm was turned over to

George Clarke who had become of age. Several years later he sold the larger portion of the homestead and Mrs. Omand and her two sons lived on a few acres where Ted Omand and his wife and two sons now reside.

Mrs. Omand died in 1924 after a very colorful career, still a handsome old lady at 72.

George Clarke still lives in Edmonton.